SEVEN THEMES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Mustard Seed Commitments

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Secretariat of Justice and Peace

In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus tells us, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches'" (Mt. 13:31-32). How are we called to respond to Jesus' example of the mustard seed? How can our small acts of faith bear great fruit for our lives and the lives of those around us?

Mustard seed commitments are concrete actions such as changes in lifestyle or habits, that someone can easily adopt. This resource can help inspire individuals or communities to take modest but sustainable commitments. See below examples that relate to each theme of Catholic social teaching.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Commit to greeting and speaking respectfully to someone who is ignored (e.g. someone who works at your parish, a neighbor, a homeless person), ensuring you treat each person you encounter with dignity.

Rights and Responsibilities

Eat one simple meal per week and donate what you'd have spent to a local shelter or ministry; or volunteer monthly at a soup kitchen or food pantry.

Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

Support fair-wage businesses; buy from companies that pay their employees well; or consciously avoid buying from companies known for unfair labor practices.

Care for God's Creation

Reduce single-use plastics at home; commit to using public transportation, carpooling, or biking at least sometimes; plant a small garden or support tree-planting/care for green spaces.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Pledge to attend one additional parish meeting or community event each month (e.g. parish council, youth ministry, town hall) and encourage others to bring someone who is not usually involved.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Commit to being more informed about one local policy issue (housing, education, healthcare). Write or call a local official at least once a year about that issue.

Solidarity

Visit the website of Caritas and Catholic Relief Services and learn about their efforts to address global issues such as poverty, disease, underdevelopment, climate change and migration.

Action:

Review the mustard seed commitment prompts for each CST theme. You can write your own commitments on the back of this sheet and then share them with others to have faith like a mustard seed!

Use the Space Below to Write Down Some Mustard Seed Commitments

Reflect on the mustard seed commitment prompts on the first page and then write your own commitments below.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'"

MATTHEW 13:31-32

How to Share Your Mustard Seed Commitments

- At parish formation sessions or small group meetings: invite people to write down their own mustard seed commitments and share them in pairs or groups.
- On social media: post your mustard seed commitment, why it matters, and invite others to commit. Perhaps tag parish pages.
- Bulletin insert or newsletter: publish a "CST Commitment of the Month" where someone shares what change they made.
- Encourage accountability: pair people up to check in with each other mid-term (e.g. after a month).

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Learn more about the Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching